



## Minutes of the Meeting

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 – 5 PM | Virtual Meeting

**Commission Members Present via WEBEX** – David Wolfram, Sari Rosenblatt, Sharon Riley, Pamela Steele, Gary Wallace, Richard Pelletier, Robert Santangelo and Councilmember Ava Hart; also present Kisha M. Michael, Staff

**Absent:** Phil Pessina, Councilmember Pulino

**Members of the Public Present** – Arya Gupta, Bella Pincus, Jane and Ximena, Kieran Boland and Paloma Yepes from the experiment in public life class at Wesleyan University.

- 1) Call to Order - meeting called to order at 5:01 p.m.
- 2) Public Session - Attendees included students from Wesley University, Arya Gupta, Bella Pincus, Jane and Ximena, Kieran Boland and Paloma Yepes
- 3) Approval of Minutes - P. Steele, Chair entertained a motion to accept or amend the minutes from [January 28, 2026](#); moved by B. Santangelo, seconded by Councilmember Hart; motion passes unanimously.
- 4) Approval of Agenda – P. Steele, Chair entertained a motion to accept or amend the agenda; moved by S. Rosenblatt, seconded by D. Wolfram; motion passes unanimously.
- 5) Remarks from the Chair – The African American Cultural Center's (MCA Grantee) project ends this week and encourages members to attend.
- 6) Staff Report – staff reported that Mayor Nocera has approved the concept of having the registration process be taken on by Oddfellows staff; and for Oddfellows to utilize the revenue generated towards their operating budget; decreasing the amount of funds requested from the city by Oddfellows. Fees will be raised slightly, for the record as follows:
  - Kids Arts – Full Fare: \$450 first student (up from \$300), \$270 second, \$180 additional
  - Reduced Rate: \$150 first student (up from \$120), \$90 additional
  - Waiver stays a waiver for all who can demonstrate TFA or SNAP
  - Out of town rate: \$750 (up from \$600)
  - a) America’s 250<sup>th</sup> – Staff charged the members to be aware of the future 250th events to include a flag raising ceremony on March 27 at 1pm at the south green, the riverfront fireworks festival on June 27 and the all-county themed parade. A volunteer form has been created and announced and encourages the commissioners to share the information.
- 7) Committee Reports – none
- 8) Unfinished Business
  - a) MCA Grants FY27 and beyond – A healthy discussion was had last month meeting; from that meeting staff highlighted items most important for transitioning the MCA grants to a more standardized format:  
*1. Equal distribution of public funding, 2. To maximize programming and reach, 3. Standardized application schedule displayed and seeing everything upfront, 4. fixed grant amounts for future MCA grants to ensure equal funding distribution among applicants. (S. Rosenblatt helped clarify that the pros listed for #1 and #4 are two of the same. And suggests to use 3 points instead of 4. Third point to read as follows: an equal distribution of funding through fixed grant amounts. This topic was clarified further down in the meeting and is relevant to*



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this section of business.) Wolfram believes a fixed amount keeps the grants from being diluted. B. Santangelo agreed and believes that art is an economic engine and somehow we should be involved with ECD to get more money. Staff also recognized that this system puts everyone on the same funding schedule and eliminates an overlap of funding; creates fairness. D. Wolfram is concerned if the organizations fundraising efforts on their end align with our schedule? How would this impact them? B. Santangelo believes that it burdens the artist when they have to raise their own funds.

- b) Fundraising Options: staff questions what does fundraising on behalf of the MCA look like? P. Steele asked if we are able to fundraise as a municipal agency. B. Santangelo advises to ask the common council. Councilmember Hart stated she will inquire. S. Riley asked why would we fundraise and suggested they fundraise themselves. D. Wolfram suggest any monies to go to the MCA checking account. If it is something that we cannot do, how can the MCA help artists develop a fundraising toolbox so they are actively fundraising each year? P. Steele affirms that we need to provide resources and not to be known as a fundraising agency. R. Pelletier asked if we can share chamber info with the artists? Councilmember Hart mentions interactive platforms for artists. P. Steele noted that it's our job to know who to connect them to as an intermediary.

### 9) New Business

- b) Semiquincentennial Art Engagement Grant Program FY26

February 13 deadline applicants - Announced three grant applications from full-time Middletown artists, showcasing growing diversity in submissions. Attached to these minutes. The executive committee will convene to vet these applications. [Submission13310](#); [Submission-13305](#); [Submission-13155](#)

### 10) Announcements

- a) The Buttonwood Tree – community update - Addressed the Buttonwood Tree's need for a new location, as they have been asked to leave the premise. Discussion ensued on emphasizing its importance to the downtown community and is an asset. G. Wallace delivered details as a board member of the connection. The connection is looking to repurpose the space; the connection and buttonwood will meeting next week for potential space at holy trinity church.

- 11) Adjournment – R. Santangelo made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Sr. Rosenblatt; meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Attachments: [Granicus](#) - virtual meeting

[Submission13310](#)

[Submission-13305](#)

[Submission-13155](#)

Respectfully submitted,  
Kisha McWilliams Michael  
Arts & Culture Coordinator, Staff